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# The Search Continues: University of Dayton Professors Examine Moral Education in American Schools

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March 11, 2005  
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## NEWS RELEASE

### THE SEARCH CONTINUES: UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON PROFESSORS EXAMINE MORAL EDUCATION IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

DAYTON, Ohio – It's not a new concept; in fact, the opposite is true. But educators and administrators alike are still grappling with moral education programs and character-building curriculum.

"The search for society to come up with a viable moral education program has been ongoing," said Thomas Hunt, professor of teacher education at the University of Dayton. "Those programs have always been present, but present in different forms and shapes."

Hunt and Monalisa McCurry Mullins, a lecturer in the department of teacher education, examine the topic in the recently released "Moral Education in America's Schools: The Continuing Challenge." The authors will hold a book signing from **1:30 to 3 p.m. on April 20 at the University of Dayton Bookstore in Marianist Hall.**

The book is an episodic, rather than comprehensive, history of moral education in America's schools. From the strong Puritan tones of colonial-era schools in the 17th century to the common school movement of Horace Mann in the early 1800s to the large-scale emergence of Catholic schools in the 19th and 20th centuries, Hunt and Mullins provide a framework for the ongoing discussion.

"Parents increasingly want options for their children's education that are based on character, respect and responsibility," Mullins said. "They want schools that support their values."

Parental dissatisfaction with public schools, according to Mullins, is reflected by the increasing number of parents choosing magnet or charter schools, participating in home schooling or lobbying for voucher programs to offset the cost of private schools.

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“For some parents, public school is no longer a viable option,” she said.

According to Hunt, the 1999 Columbine High School massacre in Colorado created a renewed interest in moral education in American schools. But it was far from a new concept, as a 1976 poll revealed that 67 percent of respondents wanted public schools to “take on a share” of responsibility for the moral behavior of students. “Lack of discipline,” according to the book, has consistently ranked as one of the major problems in American public schools for the past three decades. But the trend of increasing secularization has left educators with questions about what they can and can’t say in the classroom.

“There’s no such thing as a value-neutral classroom, and teachers need to understand that character-education programs need not conflict with the First Amendment,” Mullins said.

Hunt and Mullins hope their book becomes a resource for teachers who want to establish such programs in their schools.

“With a historical framework under their belts, they can make a better case and demonstrate their rationale,” Mullins said.

Hunt also enjoys having the opportunity to contribute to the conversation in a meaningful way and hopes to spur other efforts.

“Educators need to recognize the perennial nature of this topic and learn how to deal with it in their community,” he said.

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For media interviews, contact **Thomas Hunt** at (937) 229-3787 or **Monalisa Mullins** at (937) 229-3306.